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Senate **AMTRAK**

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is Friday. The weekend starts for most people today. It looks as if it is going to be a great weekend whether at the Delaware beaches or the New Jersey shore. Next weekend might start a little early for a lot of people in this country, for hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of commuters from Trenton, NJ, to New York, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington, Chicago, and out on the west coast, L.A., and a lot of other places as well because right now it looks as if, starting in the latter part of next week, Amtrak will begin an orderly shutdown of its operations, and there will be a cascading effect that will also lead to disruption of commuter operations in all those cities and many others I did not mention.

Amtrak is running out of operating funds for this fiscal year. They expect to run out of operating funds sometime in early July. The new president of Amtrak has announced his intention to try to negotiate a loan for Amtrak from a consortium of commercial banks, which Amtrak has done any number of times in the past, for operating moneys to bridge a period of time until the new Federal grant comes through or to negotiate money for capital improvements to Amtrak. Those negotiations were underway in earnest early this week. I understand the auditors for Amtrak were not able to say with conviction that Amtrak was a going concern because, in part, of the announcement of the administration yesterday for the Amtrak restructuring plan, which is really, in my judgment, an Amtrak dismantling plan.

Rather than Amtrak being able to negotiate the bridge loan with private lenders to carry them through the end of the year when our new appropriation might be available, Amtrak faces a cutoff of its operations, again, the impending effect on commuters throughout this country late next week.

The Presiding Officer and I have discussed this situation any number of times in the year and a half we have been here, and we have discussed it more earnestly in the last week or two. I am mindful of the efforts he is making to avert what could be a disaster. They are efforts that are supported by any number of our colleagues.

A week or so ago, 52 of us finished putting our signatures on a letter to the ranking members of the Senate Appropriations Committee voicing our support for a \$1.2 billion appropriation for Amtrak in the next fiscal year. A week or so prior to that, the Senate voted to accept a provision included in the Senate appropriations bill for another \$55 million as part of an emergency supplemental to enable repair work to begin on Amtrak locomotives, passenger cars, and sleeping cars that had been damaged in wrecks around the country, wrecks, frankly, not caused by Amtrak or Amtrak's neglect, but because of trucks that were on the tracks in some places and because of problems with track bed outside the Northeast corridor that led to a derailling.

That money is in the emergency appropriations bill passed by the Senate and is one of the items at issue in the conference.

I have been led to believe the President has threatened to veto even those moneys as part of the emergency supplemental if they remain in the bill.

We are looking at a train wreck. It seems to me we look at a train wreck about every year close to this time.

I wish to take a moment this morning to look back over time. I would like for us to go back to 1970. That was when Amtrak was created. Amtrak was created because our Nation's private railroads did not want to continue to carry passengers. They could not make money doing that. They wanted out of the business. Then-President Richard Nixon signed into law legislation creating Amtrak. The deal was the private railroads would pony up some money to buy Amtrak stock. They agreed to turn over all of their old locomotives, their old passenger cars, their old dining cars, their old sleeper cars. They agreed to turn over their old track bed in the Northeast corridor between Washington and Boston, old overhead wires, old signaling systems, old repair shops around the country, old train stations, and give all that to Amtrak.

Somehow Amtrak, with a little seed money, was to make a go of, and begin turning a profit from, operations that the private sector could not make profitable. It did not happen. We should not be surprised that it did not happen because it has not happened in other countries either.

For those Americans who this summer are going to be traveling to places in Europe-England, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, up into Scandinavia-throughout Europe, they are going to ride on trains that will almost take their breath away, beautiful trains, trains that run at speeds of close to 200 miles an hour, trains where one can sit with a cup of coffee or a cup of tea on the table and it does not even rattle or vibrate.

Americans are going to be traveling to

places in Asia this summer, and they will ride trains in Japan and other countries that provide a similar high-quality, fast, dependable service. In those countries, the private sector does not operate that train service. The national governments of those nations have decided it is in their naked self-interest to invest their taxpayers' dollars in national passenger rail service. They do not do it out of some sense of altruism. They do it because they realize that in order to relieve congestion on their highways and in their airports, passenger rail can make a big contribution toward reducing that congestion.

Those countries, those governments, realize that in order to reduce their dependence on foreign oil and to reduce their trade deficits, passenger rail service can make a real contribution.

They have problems with clean air in those countries as well, and they realize, compared to the emissions that come out of their cars, trucks, and vans, that the emissions emitted by passenger trains are far less.

We have similar kinds of concerns in this country. We have congestion around our airports and on our Nation's highways worse by far than we did in 1970. We have problems with air pollution that are as bad, or maybe worse, than the problems we faced in 1970, certainly with respect to global warming and carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. We have a trade deficit in this country that makes our trade deficit woes of 1970 pale by comparison. Over half of our oil is imported, and that number is growing. In the 1970s, not even a third of our oil was imported. National passenger rail service will not solve all of these problems for the United States, but it will help us to reduce the size of those problems. We can take a lesson from our neighbors, our sister nations in Europe and in Asia, and we ought to do

that.

There are a whole series of things that need to happen this year and next. I want to mention those, and then I will close. We need to pass an emergency appropriations bill that includes at least \$55 million so the work can begin on repairing wrecked trains in order to provide service to people, especially the Auto Train south of Washington to Orlando, FL, where Amtrak actually makes money. We need to keep that money in the supplemental appropriation. It would be great to grow it, but we at least need to keep that money.

The White House has, in my judgment, a moral responsibility. Having acted this week in a way that I believe disrupts Amtrak's ability to negotiate a private sector loan from a consortium of banks for \$200 million to carry them through the end of this fiscal year, the administration should use their discretion, authorized under law, as I understand, through the FRA, to provide a loan guarantee so that Amtrak can obtain the money it needs to avoid the kind of disruption we are going to begin witnessing by next weekend if nothing is done. We need to take up in the Senate the Amtrak reauthorization bill, which has cleared the Committee on Energy and Commerce by a vote, I think, of 21 to 3. Senator Hollings has been a champion for passenger rail service. He has authored very good legislation. Many of us have cosponsored it. We need to take it up, and we need to pass a motion to proceed and debate it.

If people want to offer amendments to it, that is all well and good. We debate amendments, vote them up or down, and then move on to the bill. Fifty-two of our colleagues in the Senate have said: We believe Amtrak ought to be funded at \$1.2 billion next fiscal year, and we need to go forward. As we take up the appropriations bill, we need to provide that money through

the appropriations process in the Senate and work with our colleagues in the House and in the administration.

Finally, we need a good, healthy debate on what the future of passenger rail service should be in this country. I realize that the heydays of passenger rail of the 1800s and the early 1900s are behind us, but there is still a huge need for the good that passenger rail service can provide us with respect to congestion, air congestion, highway congestion, with respect to reducing the emissions into our air, and with respect to reducing our reliance on foreign oil and trying to curtail, at least a little, our trade deficit.

What should the future passenger rail service be in this country? In my judgment, it ought to include making the Northeast corridor world class. As to the beautiful Acela Express train service that is now available, we are not able to harness the full potential of those trains from Washington to Boston because of the work that can and should be done to the track bed, to the overhead wires, to the signaling system, to enable the trains to go 150 or 160 miles an hour, which is faster than in many places they can now go.

We need to begin developing high-speed rail corridors in other parts of this country, the southeastern United States and Florida, in and out of Atlanta. The Northeast corridor finally should be extended at least into Virginia, maybe as far as Richmond. I know there are people in North Carolina who would like to see the Northeast corridor extended into North Carolina where they are investing in passenger rail service on their own.

There are any number of densely populated corridors such as out of Chicago, Chicago/St. Louis, Chicago/Milwaukee, Chicago/Indianapolis, Chicago/Detroit, where it makes a lot more sense for people

to travel on high-speed trains instead of on commuter airlines that are going less than 300 miles.

On the west coast, whether it is L.A. to San Diego or maybe L.A. to Las Vegas, L.A. to San Francisco, Portland, Spokane, Seattle, Portland-Seattle, Seattle-Vancouver, those are areas that are just ripe for high-speed passenger rail. The challenge for us is how to raise the money to put in place the infrastructure, the high-speed rail capability, the track bed, the overhead wires, the signaling, to be able to provide the service where it would be used. The former chairman of the Amtrak board of directors who succeeded me on the Amtrak board, and preceded me on the Amtrak board, is former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, now Secretary of Health and Human Services. He and I believe, as do many others, including many in this body, there needs to be a dedicated source of capital for passenger rail service in this country to make world class the Northeast corridor, to begin developing, in conjunction and coordination with the right-of-way of freight railroads, the high-speed corridors in these densely populated areas of America.

I was struck to learn a couple of years ago that 75 percent of the people in America today live within 50 miles of one of our coasts. Think about that. As time goes by, the density of our population, especially in those coastal areas, will not diminish, it will increase. The potential good that passenger rail service can provide for us will increase as well.

Not everybody wants to ride a train from one end of the country to the other. Some people do, but a lot of people could benefit by riding a train in a densely populated corridor. A lot of people every day ride the longest train in the world, and that is the Auto Train that leaves just south of Washington, DC, down to near Orlando, FL,

and back every day.

There are people who ride trains that go through spectacular parts of America. They go along the northern part of America, the Northwest, and the Coast Starlight from the west coast from one end of California up to the Canadian border. People are willing to pay good money to ride those trains. I think one of the big questions we face is, What do we do with the other long-distance trains where Amtrak is unable to provide service and out of the farebox pay for the full cost of the service? I was always frustrated as Governor that when Delaware received Federal transportation monies, we did not have the discretion to use any of that money to help pay for passenger rail service in our State, which did not make sense.

For example, we could use our Federal congestion mitigation money in my State—other Governors could in their States—for freight railroads. We could use it for roads and highways. We could use that Federal congestion mitigation money for bicycle paths. We could not use it for passenger rail service, even if it made sense for our States. That is foolish. That ought to change. This Senate has tried to change it any number of times. We have not gotten the support we need from the other body. Sometimes we have not gotten the support we need from the administration. We should give Governors and mayors the discretion to use a portion of their money to help underwrite the cost of long-distance trains that are not fully sustainable.

A number of years ago when I was on the Amtrak board, we started an experiment to see if Amtrak might partner with the freight railroads, when operating outside the Northeast corridor, to carry things other than people, such as mail, express packages, but also to carry other commodities, even perishable commodities, that are highly time sensitive in terms of getting where they are

needed.

A lot of times, shippers will use trucks because they believe there is a greater reliance in terms of on-time performance, and especially in shorter distances, but a greater ability than trucking to provide on-time performance, and we started an experiment to see if maybe we could carry not only people but commodities as well, and specially designed cars attached to Amtrak trains. If Amtrak were able to make money carrying these commodities on the track bed of a freight railroad, Amtrak would share the profits with the freight railroads. Amtrak would have a way to supplement its costs and to underwrite its costs of the long-distance trains which, frankly, do not make money.

Amtrak has entered into an agreement with, I believe it is the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad, to be able to do that kind of thing, and it has attempted to negotiate with other freight railroads. That could be part of a solution as well. I am not sure there is consensus in this body as to what the long-term passenger rail system should be in

this country. I am not sure we know.

We do know if we do not do something, if the administration does not do something, by next weekend we are going to have a train wreck. Not a literal train wreck but a figurative train wreck. A lot of people who will want to go to work next Thursday or Friday are not going to get to work or they will end up in traffic jams in and around their cities and communities, the likes of which they have not seen for a long time. Maybe on the brighter side, some people who didn't want to go to work next Thursday or Friday will get a long weekend. For them, maybe that is good. For our Nation, this is not good.

We need to address this issue. We need to address it today. The administration has that capability of addressing it today. The administration should use discretion as provided to the Federal Railroad Administration to use the loan guarantee to enable Amtrak to go forward for us to have an orderly debate over this fiscal year to determine the long-term course for passenger rail service in America.